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Shortage of Scientists

Science is the backbone of both our national defense and increased prosperity, yet American science is being retarded by inadequate educational facilities.

Recently Allen W. Dulles, central intelligence agency director, said that at the current rate the United States will graduate 900,000 scientists and engineers in the present decade while Soviet Russia is graduating 1,200,000 in the same period. And Russia's will not be dissipated in consumer goods industries but will concentrate on military and heavy industry projects.

No meeting of scientists passes these days without this situation getting a thorough airing. Even without worrying about Russia, the American picture is not good. Charles A. Thomas, president of the Monsanto Chemical Co., gave the American Chemical society some disturbing figures.

Last year there was need for 6,000 new science teachers in this country but only 4,000 qualified graduates came out of our educational institutions and half of them did not go into teaching.

For whatever reason, half the nation's high schools do not teach chemistry, and thus fail to interest students in it. Another 53% of the high schools have dropped physics—in an age, Thomas said, when physics is necessary to an understanding of our everyday world. This year there were openings for 35,000 to 40,000 engineers but only 26,000 were graduated.

Dr. O. H. Aurand had something to say about this situation when businessmen from the community visited local schools yesterday.

Lancaster's McCaskey High teaches both chemistry and physics and Dr. Aurand, superintendent of city schools, proposed to his visitors that when business and industry provide money for scholarship funds they earmark a portion of it—a suggested 20 per cent—"to be used to encourage science teachers who will serve as your emissaries in the schools."

He added that the need is no less urgent in mathematics, and said the schools have stepped up their elementary science program.

There are other observers who say lack of educational facilities and of encouragement to scientific careers by the schools is only part of the explanation for the shortage of scientific students. They contend that scientific careers have been discouraged by a general attitude that scientists are "queer geniuses".

"We're making amazing strides in science in spite of all this. Think of the rate we could advance if we encouraged our brightest young minds to become scientists."